

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. In a computer network, a method of automatically deploying an application to a policy recipient, comprising the steps of, maintaining an association between the application and the policy recipient, determining a time to apply information of the application to the policy recipient, and making the application available to the policy recipient at that time.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the policy recipient is a user, and wherein the step of determining a time to apply the application to the policy recipient includes the step of detecting that the user is logging on to the network.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the policy recipient is a machine, and wherein the step of determining a time to apply the application to the policy recipient includes the step of detecting that the machine is connecting to the network.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of determining a time to apply the application to the policy recipient includes the step of polling machines in the network.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of detecting a request to run the application, accessing the registry to locate the application, and executing the application.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of maintaining an association between the application and the policy recipient comprises the step of storing a script in association with policy information for that policy recipient.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the step of storing a script comprises the step of maintaining a centralized directory of network objects.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of making the application available to the policy recipient comprises the step of advertising the application as available.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of advertising the application as available includes the step of adding an application shortcut to a user profile.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of making the application available to the policy recipient comprises the step of writing information to a registry associated with the policy recipient.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the step writing information to a registry comprises the step of maintaining in the registry an association between the application and class identifier information.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein the step ^{of} writing information to a registry comprises the step of maintaining in the registry an association between the application and a file extension.

13. The method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of, detecting a user request to open a file, determining the file extension and accessing the registry to locate the application associated with the file extension, and opening the file with the application.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising the steps of, determining if the application is locally installed, and if not installed, installing the application.

15. In a computer network, a method of automatically deploying an application to a policy recipient, comprising the steps of, generating a script having information therein corresponding to the application, associating the script with a policy, and applying the policy to the policy recipient by processing the script to advertise the application as available thereto.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the policy recipient is a user, and wherein the step of applying the policy to the policy recipient is performed as part of a user network logon process.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein the policy recipient is a machine, and wherein the step of applying the policy to the policy recipient is performed as part of a re-boot process of the machine.

18. The method of claim 15 wherein the step of associating the script with a policy comprises the step of maintaining the association in a centralized directory of network objects.

19. The method of claim 15 wherein the step of applying the policy to the policy recipient includes the step of adding an application shortcut to a user profile.

20. The method of claim 15 wherein the step of applying the policy to the policy recipient includes the step of writing information to a registry associated with the policy recipient.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein the step writing information to a registry comprises the step of maintaining in the registry an association between the application and class identifier information.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein the step writing information to a registry comprises the step of maintaining in the registry an association between the application and a file extension.

23. The method of claim 15 further comprising the step of installing the application.

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24. In a computer network, a system for deploying applications to policy recipients, comprising, a centralized store of policy objects, at least one of the policy objects having an advertise script associated therewith, the advertise script including application information of at least one application for assigning to policy recipients, and a mechanism for applying policy objects to a policy recipient, wherein at least one of the policy objects applied to that recipient has the advertise script associated therewith, the mechanism processing the script to advertise at least one application to the policy recipient.

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